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Soviets Renew Charges That U.S. Has Usurped Radio Frequency

The Soviet Union last week renewed complaints that the United States has usurped a long-wave radio frequency that had been reserved for Radio Moscow.

The issue, which was raised with American diplomats in Moscow and popped up at least twice during the week in the Soviet press, was seen by officials here as part of a campaign to deprive Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty of their headquarters in West Germany.

Radio Moscow, in an English language broadcast beamed to North America said: "The Soviet Foreign Ministry has again called the United States' attention to the illegal use of the 173-kilocycle frequency by the Voice of America transmitter in Munich . . . The Soviet Union . . . has protested about these illegal actions." Tass, meanwhile, said that VOA was using the frequency "in flagrant disregard for accepted international norms."

The VOA resumed use of frequency 173 in mid-1969 in an effort to counter Soviet jamming of voice broadcasts. The frequency had been allocated to Radio Moscow by the 1948 Copenhagen Convention.

VOA is a government-run operation entirely separate from Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty. But Tass went on to draw RFE and Radio Liberty into its dispatch on what it called the illegal use of frequency 173. Tass described RFE and Radio Liberty as "so-called 'private radio stations' which are in fact, and the Americans themselves have admitted this, branches of the CIA, generously financed by American intelligence."

VOA officials noted that the Russian campaign against U.S. use of long-wave frequency 173 had been quiescent for some time but was revived after Sen. Clifford P. Case (R-N.J.) introduced a bill to put congressional controls on Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty. Case charged that these operations were secretly financed over the last 20 years with "several hundred million dollars in U.S. government funds."

U.S. officials also linked the Soviet campaign against the American broadcasting organizations to the recently signed Bonn-Moscow treaty. They believe Moscow is trying to use West German desire for detente in Europe as a means to squeeze these organizations out of a base.

While the Russians did not raise the issue directly during the negotiations leading to the treaty they did mention informally that they did not believe that the continuation of broadcasts by these organizations, which they considered provocative, were consistent with the sprit of detente.